

THE PLACE OF MASS MEDIA IN RURAL AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATION AMONG
SMALL-SCALES FARMERS IN DEKINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE,
NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the place of mass media in rural agricultural communication among small-scale farmers in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. Using a stratified random sampling technique, thirty small-scale farmers were selected from each of the four districts bringing the number of respondents to one hundred and twenty farmers. The relevant data for the study were collected through a set of structured questionnaire administered to the respondents. The study examined the socio-economic characteristics of small-scale farmers in the study area, perception of farmers towards the use of mass media and the relationship between farmers acquired knowledge from agricultural communication and improved agricultural practices. The analytical tools used in this study included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and five point likert scale. From the results, it was affirmed that the respondents to a reasonable extent were educated at the primary level, of middle age, predominantly males, mostly married and were involved in agriculture on full time basis. Results of the likert scale revealed that most of the respondents had access to at least one source of mass media and have adopted various technologies based on experience gained from various sources of mass media. Analysis of the preference of the farmers for the various mass media sources revealed that 45% of the farmers preferred radio agricultural programmes to newspapers and television information, 30% prefer television programmes to the other two sources while only 25% prefer newspaper information to television or radio. The correlation results revealed that all the variables except number of respondents with tertiary education had a positive correlation with the choice of mass media. Number of respondents that were uneducated had the highest correlation of 0.744 and was significant at 5% level of probability. Among the recommendations based on the findings were; The need for Government and private organizations to sponsor agricultural programmes with emphasis on the use of local languages, establishment of local media stations in rural areas to create the needed awareness and involvement of farmers in planning for dissemination of information using the various sources of mass media for effective feedback mechanism.

Keywords: Mass media, communication, technologies, programme, perception.

INTRODUCTION

Mass media as one of the sources of information can be very helpful in creating awareness and changing the behaviour of farmers towards better utilization of research findings and proper management of their resources.

Lai (1990) however asserted that clear understanding of agricultural communication in the rural area and the role mass media could play in the process must be grounded in a thorough analysis of the nature and characteristics of the rural areas and the meaning of agricultural communication itself.

Several studies have shown that the role played by information suggest the need for the blending of as many sources as possible to produce greater results. Evidence shows that publication of newsletters and bulletin alone for agricultural information for rural people do not meet the information that farmers need in

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Farmers socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Gender:			
Male	71	59.2	50
Female	49	40.8	
Education:			
Primary	45	37.5	20
Secondary	25	20.8	
Diploma	15	12.5	
Degree	15	12.5	
Not at all	20	16.7	
Age (Years):			
15 – 30	23	19.2	25
31 – 45	61	50.8	
46 – 60	26	21.7	
> 61	10	8.3	
Marital status:			
Single	40	33.3	25
Married	60	50	
Widow/widower	5	4.2	
Separated/others	15	12.5	
Major Occupation:			
Full time farmers	72	60	50
Part time farmers	48	40	

Source: *Field Survey, 2008.*

Table 2: Results of the Likert Scale Showing the Perception of Farmers towards the various Sources of Mass media

Farmer's Attitude	(5) SA	(4) A	(3) U	(2) DA	(1) SD	Total No. of Respondents	Total No. of attitude score	Average mean score
1. My only source of agricultural information is through mass media.	8	6	10	36	60	120	226	1.88
2. I have adopted new technologies based on my experience gained from various sources of mass media.	30	35	15	35	5	120	410	3.42
3. I am a regular participant in agricultural extension programme.	43	35	14	14	14	120	439	3.66
4. Lack of feedback has prevented me from the use of mass media.	16	35	4	50	15	120	347	2.89
5. Mass media is only designed for the rich people.	10	20	6	44	40	120	276	2.30
6. I enjoy listening to the radio only but cannot read.	16	30	4	48	22	120	330	2.75

Source: *Field Survey, 2008.*

Where SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, DA = Disagree Agree and SD = Strongly Agree.

Table 3: Preference of Farmers for the Different Sources of Mass Media

Sources Of Mass Media	Preference (%)	
	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	55	45.8
Television	35	29.2
Newspaper	30	25

Source: Field Survey, 2008

Table 4: Results of Pearson Correlation Showing the Relationship between Choice of Mass Media Sources and Some Selected Variables.

S/N	Variables	Pearson Correlation (r) on Choice of Mass Media Sources			
		r (Pearson Correlation)	Sig. (1 tailed)	Mean	Std.
1.	Knowledge acquired on crop production.	0.171	.236	4.20	1.54
2.	Knowledge acquired on animal production.	0.556	.005	2.85	1.66
3.	Knowledge acquired on cooperative/marketing.	0.502	.011	2.40	1.39
4.	Number of male respondents	0.003	.441	2.70	1.34
5.	Number of female respondents	0.009	.486	2.45	1.57
6.	Number of uneducated respondents	0.744	.002	3.65	0.49
7.	Number with primary/ secondary education.	0.499	0.18	3.15	1.66
8.	Number of respondents with tertiary education.	-0.253	.141	2.15	0.933

Field survey, 2008.

regards to technology but such information can be supplemented with radio which is a very good medium for supplying information at the awareness stage in the adoption process in learning (Agada, 2003).

Similarly, Niger State Agricultural Development Project (NSADP) in 2001 reported that rural radio agricultural programmes have the fastest and successful avenue of disseminating new technologies to rural farmers. Not only do farmers seek and find information in radio but such media behaviour has been associated with increases in farmer's knowledge of improved agricultural practices.

Obinne (1994) however reported that extension agents have not awarded credit to the use of radio to disseminate agricultural innovations due to a number of limitations such as broadcasting time, lack of radio set due to high cost and that radio programmes may not give enough details about extension activities. It is also reported that newspapers were used to attract farmers to read the leaflet containing agricultural messages because of the different coloured pictures and simple bolded letters.

In a related development, Olowu (1993) reported that newspapers can be read and re-read at convenience, thus allowing further and better understanding of the message content.

It is in recognition of the vital role played by mass media in agricultural communication that this study attempts to:

- determine the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area.
- describe the perception of the farmers towards the use of mass media.
- identify the most preferred mass media source by the respondents.
- ascertain the relationship between farmers acquired knowledge and various agricultural practices.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. According to National Population Census 2006, the Local Government has a total population of about 231, 200 people settled within the four districts namely Okura, Dekina, Biraidu and Iyale. The inhabitants of this area are predominantly Igalas with few migrant tribes like Bassa-Komo, Bassa-Nge, Hausas, Yorubas and the Igbos. Majority of the people are mostly subsistence farmers growing crops such as yams, cassava, maize, guinea corn, millet, vegetables etc.

Source of Data Collection

The data for this study were primary data collected from the small-scale farmers with the aid of structured questionnaire.

Sampling Procedure

A stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting thirty (30) small-scale farmers from each of the four districts bringing it to a total of one-hundred and twenty farmers.

Analytical Technique

- i) The perception and attitudinal data of the small-scale farmers towards the application of mass media were measured using a five-point likert type of scale according to Blum and Nalyor (1984) and their statements were weighed as

Strongly Agree	(SA)	= 5
Agree	(A)	= 4
Undecided	(U)	= 3
Disagree	(D)	= 2
Strongly Disagree	(SD)	= 1

The average mean score computed as follows:

$$\text{Average mean score} = \frac{\text{Total sum of scores}}{\text{Total number of respondents}}$$

While the attitude score of respondents was computed by summing the products of the total respondents and the weight attached to each.

- ii) Pearson correlation coefficient was used to find the relationship between farmers acquired knowledge and various agricultural practices.
- ii) Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages were used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socio-economic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. Most of the respondents (59.2%) were males. Primary school education was the highest qualification of the farmers representing 37.5% and this was followed by those with secondary school education representing 20.8%. This low literacy level may affect the rate of adoption because they have limited sources of information. Majority (50.8%) of the farmers were between 31 – 45 years of age, with an average mean age of 25 years. This is an economically active age bracket that is favourable for the quest for agricultural information from various mass media sources. Most of the respondents (50%) were married with 60% of them involved in farming on full time basis.

Table 2 shows the results of the five point likert scale which represents the perception of farmers towards the various sources of mass media. The result revealed that most of the farmers had access to at least one source of mass media which was represented by the highest mean value of 3.66. This various sources of mass media which the farmers had access to have influenced them in adopting new technologies and this

accounts for a mean value of 3.42. This finding agrees with Arokoyo (1996), who reported that television viewing centers were used to improve farmer's performance on the various crop techniques. However, majority of the farmers had other sources of information and did not depend only on the mass media sources and this account for its low mean value of 1.88.

Table 3 presents the preference of the farmers for the different sources of mass media. The Table revealed that 45% of the farmers prefer radio agricultural programmes to newspapers and television agricultural news, 30% prefer television news to the other two sources and 25% prefer newspaper information to television or radio news. The high patronage of radio respondents is due to its wide coverage within communities at a relatively low cost. This study agrees with Agada (2003) that said that agricultural programmes on radio have helped to change the lives of most farmers in agricultural technological advancement. The least preferred media source is newspaper information and this may be due to the low literacy level among the farmers.

Table 4 revealed that all the variables except number of respondents with tertiary education had a positive correlation with the choice of mass media. Number of respondents that were uneducated had the highest correlation of 0.744 with choice of media and was significant at 5% level of probability. The correlation result implies that the uneducated respondents to a very significant level (74.4%) vary in their choice of the method of mass media to patronize. The knowledge acquired on animal production had the next highest correlation value of 0.556 and was significant at the 5% level of probability. The number of respondents with tertiary education had the least correlation of -0.253 and was not significant. This implies there was no relationship between choice of mass media sources and number of respondents with tertiary education. This is in line with a prior expectation as the respondents with tertiary education are expected to be compatible with any source of mass media used in communication. They therefore don't have to bother about expressing choice for one source over another.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of the study revealed that most farmers in the rural areas have developed positive attitudes towards the use of mass media in obtaining agricultural information as a result of its enlightenment and awareness efforts. However, rural farmers have not utilized this advantage to its fullest due to wrong timing of their agricultural programmes, low level of literacy of the farmers and irregular nature of broadcast.

Some farmers had developed negative attitudes towards the use of mass media since there were other sources they could obtain agricultural information. Lack of electricity supply, low income and low literacy level has been identified as major constraints to maximum utilization of agricultural messages. Thus mass education, use of radio, television and newspapers should be complemented with other sources of information for effective agricultural information dissemination as suggested by Khan (1987).

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made;

- 1) Government and private organizations should sponsor agricultural programmes with emphasis on the use of local languages.
- 2) Local media stations should be established in local areas to create the needed education and awareness among the rural farmers.
- 3) Agricultural programmes should be broadcasted at the time most suitable for farmers especially between 4 – 6pm when most farmers must have returned from the farm.
- 4) Rural farmers should be involved in planning agricultural information occasionally for effective feedback mechanism.

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